

Reduce Reuse Recycle – Outside the Home

There has been a lot of chatter around the world lately about banning single use plastic bags. Thailand has banned them. London has banned them. Vancouver is looking at banning them. Many states and provinces are thinking about banning them.

Single use plastics are convenient, and often used outside the home. We've all been guilty of grabbing a to-go coffee or a bottle of water in the drive through before work, or ordering takeout with little thought of the plastic cutlery that it comes with. And while most people own a reusable water bottle, coffee cup, and some grocery bags, how many of people own produce style bags and glass or metal straws? Even fewer people carry reusable cutlery and bring their own containers for leftovers and takeout at restaurants.

Standing in a line up at a store you can still see that half the people are still buying flimsy plastic bags. Carrying reusable grocery bags in your car, your backpack, or your bike is a good way to ensure they are always with you. There are excellent choices that fold into a tiny little pouch or pocket that can be carried easily. These can be often purchased at your local dollar store.

Using mesh or linen produce bags to purchase your vegetables, fruit and bulk items can also be a time saver. A moderate initial investment can give you an attractive bag which can often store your produce in an environmentally friendly way. Many fruits and vegetables need that breathing space that a plastic bag doesn't have so your produce may also last longer.

Another option with shopping is to bring containers to be refilled. Most grocery stores can weigh the container and then weigh it full, saving time at home.

Keeping a reusable cup, water bottle, straw, cutlery and container for leftovers with you, in your car or backpack, will ensure that you have these items when you need them. Just remember to tell servers that you have your own cutlery, straws or refillable containers when you order.

Most gas stations and restaurants will refill your water bottle with tap water if you ask.

Everyone can use their purchasing power to reflect their values regarding single use plastics. Even if a store cannot refill a reusable container, the more people who ask to do this, and give feedback, the sooner stores will figure out to give you what you want. Go places where they can refill your containers or use environmentally friendly products. You can buy things with less packaging and refuse to buy things that have too much. Remember, people may be watching, and having a discussion about why you are doing what you are doing, and you may influence others to think about their decisions.

We can make new habits one at a time. Reduce is the first principal of the three Rs.

Please feel free to email me at Golden@wildsight.ca to give me feedback on this article and share your ideas and questions regarding Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.